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AUTHOR Tickoo, Makhan L.
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ABSTRACT

The question of what language should be aimed at in teaching English as an international language has of late been receiving much attention. Three viewpoints have emerged and each shows a different understanding. This paper examines each of these viewpoints to understand its possible impact on the teaching of English as a foreign language in India. An educational alternative for the future is presented based on twin beliefs that the current English language teaching system must set itself realistic and attainable goals, and that any viable alternative must primarily be judged by how far and how well it answers the needs and aspirations of the vast majority of Indian stakeholders. (JL)

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Stakeholders and Standards: Englishes for Tomorrow's India

Makhan L Tickoo

Abstract: 'What standard(s) should be aimed at in teaching English as an international language?' has of late been receiving a good deal of attention among linguistic scholars. Three viewpoints have emerged and each shows a different understanding of the what and the why. In this paper I first examine each view to understand its (possible) impact on TEFL in India and on all those Indians whose lives are influenced by this language. I then sketch an educational alternative for the future based in the twin beliefs a) that the current ELT system, having failed to uphold its stated objectives and proved itself incapable of meeting the major challenges it faces as an organ of national growth and development, must set itself realistic and attainable goals and b) that any viable alternative must primarily be judged by how far and how well it answers the needs and aspirations of the vast majority of English language's Indian stakeholders.

Introduction

English is not an Indian language. Nor, on the other hand, is it just a foreign/second language. This language influences the lives and fortunes of not just those millions who learn it and use it, nor only those larger and fast multiplying millions who suffer in untold ways for failing to do either. Its evergrowing power and influence, its rapidly-expanding roles and functions, its complex relationships with India's own languages of learning and use (see, e.g. Tickoo 1990), its privileged position but also the undiminished public challenges to that power and position and, above all, the 'hidden curriculum' that operates in the attitudes to its teaching, learning and use, are among the issues that confront all its stakeholders. All these issues require careful attention in considering the place of English in tomorrow's India and each one has to be addressed in answering the question 'What standards should be aimed at in the teaching and learning of English in India?' The question is thus not a mere (socio)linguistic conundrum, nor just a daunting challenge to ESL pedagogy. It engages the politician and policy planner, the (socio)linguist and language programme developer, the educational administrator, and, most of all, all those who seek and, every agency or individual that, in various ways, provides access to the unique riches and resources of this language.

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English in India has to be viewed simultaneously as part of the subcontinent's problem-plagued multilingual policies and its uniquely rich and varied linguistic heritage. Fascinatingly complex, the former perpetually presents frustratingly irresolvable problems. As Morris Jones found in the 1960s, "It is misleading to speak of dealing with the problem of language in contemporary India; it is a matter of containing and limiting a difficulty and learning to live with it "(Jones 1967). The latter - a priceless asset - has found strong support in the hope-inspiring findings of recent bilingual research (see, e.g. Cummins & Swain 1986), viz. that becoming bilingual adds uniquely to a person's personality and potential and that therefore English alongside other languages of learning is capable of making sizeable contributions to a better equipped and more resilient socio-economic system.

This paper is premised on the following four basic beliefs: (a) that the 28 million (Kachru 1987) users of English in India form a small minority of the language's stakeholders, (b) that the currently accepted and essentially linguistic answers to the question: 'What standard(s) should be aimed at in the teaching/ learning and use of English?' are proving grossly ineffective and unacceptably wasteful, (c) that a viable and workable answer must, as well as making the best possible use of the nation's educational resources, serve the interests of all those whose lives and fortunes are influenced by the roles and status of English and, most important of all, (d) that such an answer requires a consensus among policy planners and influential linguists followed by determined action to make it work. Divided into two parts,the paper attempts a brief analysis of the existing answers (Part I) with a view to making it serve as a basis for outlining an alternative (Part II) which in turn is informed by the understanding that the English language of today which "comes in many guises" (Quirk and Stein 1990) must, in tomorrow's India, become an efficient instrument of socio-economic reconstruction serving to improve the lives of all its stakeholders.

I. Analysing the answers

Three propositions can be said to roughly represent the current macro-level (socio)linguistic views on the subject of standards in international English. Each has latterly been articulated in scholarly works on the subject and each finds sizeable support among one or more influential groups of linguistic scholars and language educators. The three are:

a. the liberal-norms proposition which does not require the EF(S)L system to work towards any predetermined standards;

b. the universal norms proposition which is a product of the understanding that a uniform standard of English not only exists but is and should continue to be the only norm for every system where English is taught and used as a second or foreign language;

c. the autonomous norms proposition which is supported by the awareness that in at least some parts of the ESL world where this language has been used for several generations, new indigenous norms have already evolved and it is these national norms which are best suited to the systems of teaching and learning in such countries.

In what follows I shall look at a-c to understand some relevant aspects of their impact on India's ELT system and on its products.

a. Liberation or Deprival?:

"Our speech/writing in English needs to be intelligible only to those with whom we wish to communicate in English" (Smith 1988 emphasis added), expresses a stand which can evoke two different responses. That it suggests a catholicity of outlook with a willingness to embrace language variation across cultures, is one; that it smacks of permissiveness in showing a wanton disregard for essential standards, is the other. Inside today's India this 'liberationist' view can be seen to command sizeable support among at least two sections of language practitioners. It most of all appeals to that section of India's linguistic scholars whose analysis of even the most basilectal uses of English (e.g. IPE: in Mehrotra 1982) shows creative processes at work, attests to the functional appropriateness of each such use and justifies giving it the status of a viable variety. Among large sections of the EFL practitioners this view appears also to make a wide appeal in as much as it provides a seal of approval for English teaching in thousands of vernacular-medium schools which form the bulk of the formal schooling system and whose products very often speak and write English which they alone understand. Above all, although it lacks curricular sanction, it can be said to be in operation in a majority of state-run schools. In the words of the Gokak Committee on the teaching of English, "Even pupils who have matriculated with first class marks, passing out of a high school which has a regional language as its medium, fail generally to understand either their P.U.C or higher secondary texts or the lectures delivered in English in the P.U.C classes. As for expression, it is almost non-existent in the large majority of cases or has a ghost-life in which the likeness to the original is getting fainter and fainter every day. There are almost as many kinds of written English as there are candidates taking an examination" (Gokak 1967).

For all its popular appeal and humane stance, however, this liberal and 'liberating' proposition appears, in the final analysis, to work against the products of the schools that in practice embody it. In economic terms it locks most such school-leavers into the least paid jobs or, in a growing percentage of cases, consigns them to the category of unemployables. In a country where a functional command of factual English is a gateway to the bulk of better-paid jobs, such an objective also serves to perpetuate the worst forms of India's debilitating language-based 'caste' system. In its failure to recognise that decisions on who communicates with whom, when or where, are in most cases made by the necessities of public life, such a view also seems to promise a world where wishes determine rewards.

The social consequences of an educational policy that adopts such a view are already well known. They apply in equal measure in both ES(F)L and ENL (English as a first language) worlds. In both, as Widdowson points out, "nose picking and bad grammar are social markers" (Widdowson 1988) and in both "Minimal human beings are free to behave as they choose so long as they are kept in their place and do not threaten to gatecrash the party" (Ibid). In each case before they seek membership in one or another important domain of public life, aspirants must learn the linguistic etiquette and behaviour that characterise it.

For all its promise of making learning fun and language use easy, this anything-goes proposition thus hardly merits the linguistic respectability or pedagogic attention that it has latterly begun to receive. The path to liberation that it charts is also the surest road to economic deprivation and social degradation.

b. <u>High Aims, Low Opportunities</u>:

The second proposition, as pointed out above, comes with the understanding that there is "a single monochrome standard form" (Quirk 1985) of English (SE) that is capable of serving all needs equally. Anything that does not conform to its structures and systems has therefore to be seen not only as "low on the cline of Englishness" (Quirk 1988) but also deviant and deficient. In India its votaries include many leaders in education, media and politics who see little reason for a separate set of norms for the language's use in the country. In their view the users' failures are always a result of not keeping in touch with the evolving idiom in 'real' English and the obvious remedy lies in doing so. All this finds support in the widely held belief in the educated native speaker's inviolable right and innate ability to act as model and lay down the rule. What is more, it is something for which she/he "bears a certain responsibility" and has "a certain interest" (Quirk 1989). The only viable goal for ESL systems is therefore to submit to a firmly fixed universal standard.

Traditionally regarded as unexceptionable, the acceptance of SE as "the ubiquitous norm" (Quirk & Stein: 1990) bristles with problems, both of theory and of practical pedagogy.

Linguistically, SE relies on concepts such as native speaker and mother tongue. Both beg a number of questions and are being seen as "the linguist's... professional myths" (Ferguson 1982) by a growing number of language educators (e.g. Kachru 1982, Paikeday 1988), some of whom now seek or suggest alternatives (Rampton 1990) that warrant a radical rethinking of both concepts.

Educationally, SE raises a number of issues at several levels of pedagogic responsibility. The first applies to the vast majority of ES(F)L systems. Linguists who advocate SE as the only acceptable model do so in the knowledge that the best way to make it work is to tap native-speaker judgment and authority. Here, for instance, is part of expert advice for teachers of written English: "The technique of reformulation has much promise, although it is not free of problems. It is important to find a native reformulator who writes reasonably well. But even if the writer is only average, writers are still getting a model of native language input, which in itself is important. In learning how to say things correctly or appropriately in a target language, we frequently find ourselves turning for assistance to any native we are speaking to, regardless of whether the person is a qualified language teacher" (emphasis added Cohen 1989; also see Quirk 1989).

What we have above is unquestioned faith in the native-speaker's ability to not only speak correctly and appropriately but to write with assured competence and, what is more, to serve as the ultimate guide to ESL teachers in their work. Apart from the fact that there is as yet little empirical evidence to support such faith, there are reasons to doubt whether the 'gift' which is said to lie in what are called "radically different internalisations" (Coppieters 1987 as quoted in Quirk 1989) of a native speaker, is truly so universal (See, e.g. Christopherson 1990 for some serious doubts on Coppieters' research.)

First, work being done on first language users of English in both schools (e.g. Martin 1985) and colleges (e.g. Donovan & McClelland 1980), shows that the genres related to important aspects of academic and professional writing have, in the main, to be learnt in school and, for certain purposes (e.g. business or technical reports etc.) at the graduate-school level. As John Swales points out, "in all these cases...it would seem that being a native speaker or near-native speaker is itself not enough for the timely and efficient creation of a successful product" (Swales 1986). Secondly, it is common knowledge that "large numbers of young adults leave school without ever becoming proficient writers" (Hedge 1988) in their first language. More importantly perhaps, as I have shown elsewhere (Tickoo 1988), even experienced native teachers who speak well and write competently, may at times be unable to provide guides to usage that reflect current idiom. Above all, in contexts where English is taught primarily for use in

intranational purposes, it may have become part of pedagogic wisdom to consider the view that "It is hard to see anything but native speaker self-interest in promotion of the 'native speaker knows' myth." (George:1991)

Another set of problems is more true of India than it is of, say, Singapore or Brunei. With millions of learners struggling to learn English in 'difficult circumstances' (West 1960), SE as a universal goal is far from attainable. For most such pupils it is rare to come in contact with a speaker who can serve as a model of such English. Schools in which the foundations of English are laid, are, in a majority of cases, staffed by teachers whose own use of English is full of peculiarities of usage and literal translations of the local idiom. Especially in such acquisition-poor environments which constitute the bulk and where contact with the language is limited to an hour a day in the English classroom, it is rare for learners to acquire even a basic competence in the use of English. As the number of Indian pupils seeking to learn English grows larger, the links with SE are becoming more and more tenuous. For the vast majority of Indian pupils SE has already become a totally unreachable target.

The educational failures also breed major social problems which are likely to assume threatening proportions if the system continues its current curricular commitment to this manifestly unattainable goal. These include the growing potential for social divisiveness: the ever-widening gulf which separates students who enter tertiary-level institutions with a (near) safe command of English (i.e. the products of genuinely English-medium schools) and the vast majority who do not. The former constitute a separate 'caste' in educational institutions and, after they leave school, in work-places; they demand and often receive differential treatment and, on most occasions, they react in totally dissimilar ways to life and learning. This gulf may soon become an unbreachable chasm with horrendous socio-economic consequences. Besides, where the goals set are unreachable, the average pupil almost always gives up in hopelessness, thus adding to the national system's unacceptably high percentage of drop-outs and the frighteningly enormous educational wastage.

Finally, there is a major set of problems which lie in resource mobilization: the upholding of SE depends on the availability of qualified and trained ES(F)L teachers. India's teacher-training colleges where primary and secondary teachers receive their pre- or in-service training are, in the vast majority of cases, not the places where teachers can keep in touch with the structure of British or American English. Nor is there adequate provision to attempt such a task in the nine state-level English Language Institutes (ELTIs) (Jain 1990) that exist today. With one or two exceptions, they are understaffed and grossly ill-equipped for any large-size or long-term specialist training. They remain content with ad hoc, short-term courses for a small minority of English teachers. In most mother-tongue medium schools English is now taught by teachers who are neither trained nor qualified to do so.

SE as the universal goal may thus be posing a challenge which, besides making unacceptably high demands on the national systems' limited manpower resources, is becoming a main source of highly destructive socio-economic disparity.

c. High Rhetoric, Low Recognition:

Relatively new, the autonomous norms proposition has of late been gaining a lot of support among linguists and language educators. Most (socio)linguists of today would, for instance, find little to doubt in David Crystal's contention that for the English language "language variation and language change (are) ... at the centre of its identity" (Crystal 1988), although only a few may have either his foresight or the mental preparedness required to visualize a day in the next 100 years "when the home languages of Indians, Americans, Jamaicans, and others are mutually unintelligible, but the whole community is bound together by the continuing existence of a lingua franca" which he terms "an English international lingua franca".

A growing acceptance of the view that non-native varieties of English, or new Englishes (Pride 1982, Platt 1984) have earned the right to autonomous existence ('norm setting status': Kachru 1985) is only partly an offshoot of growing nationalism in the countries of the 'outer circle' (Kachru 1985) where English now serves some of the most vital functions in living and learning. The main strength of such a view is owed to two other types of understanding: one, that in some ESL countries the indigenisation of English may be a result as much of markedly distinctive styles of creative construction and socio-cultural interaction as of apparent pedagogic failure (or what Platt (1989) calls "products of mishearing and overgeneralization") and secondly, that the accredited native speaker of the language may no longer be the right model to emulate in many characteristic contexts of English use inside such countries.

However, to assert that English in India is a variety like any other or that, in important ways, it is an institutionalised, self-contained and rule-governed system, has obvious implications for everyone who is entrusted with the maintenance of its standards in teaching, evaluation and use. Problems start just there and many, once again, defy easy solutions. The main ones include the following:

i. Attitudinal blind alleys A major if not entirely intractable problem is largely attitudinal: most administrators and a sizeable percentage of influential English educators are not convinced that English as used in India today (IndE) is by any definition a "viable variety" (Daswani 1974). With good reason, some of them argue that "there are a large number of different Indian Englishes" only the best of which should be designated

"educated Indian English" (Das 1982). Others go further and believe that IndE is just another name for "bad English" (Rao 1965); it is "the careless use of prepositions, the careless use of idioms, many of them distinctly Indian (which) proclaims it as a fractured version of English... It may have flavour... but no language has ever become acceptable for the educated of the world on the ground that it has a flavour of its own" (Wasi 1970).

There can be two possible motivations for such attitudes. One, widely shared, is an understandable concern for international intelligibility. The other is that many of those who refuse to recognise educated IndE as a variety and most of those who look down upon it, do so principally because their minds are made up about what constitutes 'real' English or, what is no less true, that they deliberately pick on examples of bad grammar/usage to arrive at such categorical judgments. What should help in both cases is awareness of two different kinds. First, that intelligibility is a barely understood complex phenomenon which is often only partly related to a user's mastery of the linguistic system. Second, that other Englishes, e.g. American English (e.g. Kahane 1977) or Australian English (Kaldor in this volume) have had to pass through similar stages on their way to international acceptance.

ii. Issues in implementation: Truly intractable problems arise, however, when the national EFL system or a part thereof begins to grapple with the challenges of implementing the autonomous norm. Questions that arise here are not just those of what to accept or reject, insist on or make optional but what authority to rely upon or what models to emulate in formal or informal encounters in either intranational or international contexts of use. Let us look at parts of what happens.

The first major problem is where to look for normative guidance or authority. IndE has not yet been defined or, for pedagogical purposes, devised as a model. Nor as yet is there a book or manual that provides access to acceptable Indianisms. Even the ad hoc collections that have latterly become available (e.g Nihalani, Tongue, Hosali 1979), fail to take a stand on whether or when to accept which listed item.[1]

Closely related to the above are two avoidable failures: 1) the Indian linguists' failure to separate rhetoric from reality and 2) their inability to offer the practitioner support or security. Both are best illustrated by actual examples.

1. Of late linguists have been at work to describe some aspects of the grammar of IndE. An excerpt from one such attempt follows:

"English English imposes certain tense and pronominal restrictions on the choices in the embedded sentences; Indian English tends to relax these restrictions:

IE: I asked Hari where does he work.
EE: I asked Hari where he worked.
IE: Tell me clearly are you coming.
EE: Tell me clearly if you are coming.....

It might seem tempting to dismiss these patterns as nothing more than an accumulation of errors or foreignisms caused by the failure of the speakers to master standard English... They have assumed such stability and continuity that they can be seen more like dialectal innovations than ephemeral foreignisms. The sentences in the preceding list are all part of the grammar of a great many educated speakers of English. This variety does not prevent effective communication; it is capable of clarity, complexity, power, and tenderness" (Verma 1982).

Now, there can be little doubt about the authenticity of the statements made above: the example sentences are part of the English spoken by many, perhaps a majority, of educated Indians. Also, used in context, they may not cause any miscomprehension. Doubt may be raised about their presumed 'power', 'tenderness', 'complexity' but that is perhaps a question of subjective judgment. What is at issue however is whether and in what contexts the author himself would permit if not defend such usages. The fact is that both in what they teach and in what they put in their pedagogic grammars or instructional materials, Indian linguists, with few exceptions, refuse to give any place to such usages. In most cases, as custodians of standards which they inevitably are, they find themselves correcting or, in appropiate contexts, penalizing such 'mistakes' or aberrations in their students' writings. Therein lies the first 'formidable' pedagogic roadblock .

2. The second example comes from my experience as a writer of Centrally sponsored materials at India's only foreign-languages university (viz. CIEFL) which is also charged with the maintenance of high standards. In the mid-seventies a multi-media package of general-purpose EFL materials was being prepared by a team at CIEFL. I was one of them. The materials for Stage 1 having been finalised, they had to be audio-recorded. The team deliberated on the choice of the model and, by consensus, decided for General Indian(GI) which, having by then received support from several research studies in India and in the U.K (Bansal: 1969, Masica and Dave 1972), was gaining acceptance among influential sections of linguists and educators. A problem soon arose

however:-none of the team was prepared to participate in the recording as no one felt confident of being able to spontaneously speak GI. Nor was any member of the Phonetics Department, each of whom including the author of GI (Bansal 1968), believed that their own English 'approximated' RP in many more ways than it did GI "even at its best".[2] The materials were recorded but the model was RP.

Similar examples abound. They come from tertiary-level institutions as well as schools where the foundations of English are laid. In varying ways each provides supportive evidence to show the intractable problems that stand between upholding IndE and making it an effective pedagogic model. The source- and course-books that serve teachers and students alike, are still either imported from the U.K or modelled on/derived from British reference grammars or, more often, their derivatives. Although the bulk of school-level English textbooks and auxiliary materials have been indigenised and a large number of anthologies for undergraduate courses are produced by Indian authors/editors of such materials, their model remains virtually unchanged. It is English English.

What does all this add up to? The answer is that the battle for realistic attitudes and action remains to be fought and it has to be fought not so much in the ENL world where most of the current dialogue is taking place, as among policy planners and language programme designers inside India. IndE as a norm-setting variety seems as yet to be thus more an unmet challenge than an unrecognised reality.

II. What we have seen so far is that despite their obvious strengths, the three linguistic solutions are incapable of forming the base of an ELT system which can serve the interests of the vast majority of English language's Indian stakeholders. What remains is to look for an alternative which has a good chance of doing so. The following points have received attention in the making of a pragmatic, if also somewhat controversial and futuristic, proposal that is outlined below:

1. For the definable future the English language will continue to be by far the most powerful linguistic resource in India's economic growth and reconstruction. However, to justify this dominant role and, at the same time, become a valued ally for the growing millions whose lives are influenced by it, its use must be governed by a clear awareness of four fundamentals:

   a. The first is that the ELT systems, both public and private, formal and non-formal, must avowedly aim at and work for social equality and not be used, as they have for long been, to maintain inequality or to perpetuate the currently debilitating 'caste' system.

b. The second which supports the first, is that language standards, being primarily normative, are mainly determined by those in education and public life who have traditionally assumed the right and authority to be the arbiters. This being so, it follows that the issue of standards in ESL is in important ways attitudinal and aesthetic and that no alternative can succeed without a major change of heart among those Indians who wield power and influence decisions on acceptability and use.

c. A closely related third point is that the ever-growing power of English has generated strongly entrenched and supremely powerful vested interests that are bound to feel badly threatened by any curricular reform that seeks to equalise the opportunities of access to this language. The most formidable obstruction to any reform may therefore lie in the influence that such interest groups wield in decision making and programme implementation.

d. Fourthly, something that illustrates part of the same phenomenon: not enough is being done to grasp the impact that getting an exclusively English education, which a minority of better placed Indians manage for their children, has on the society as a whole. What is known is that it adds to the numbers of "denationalized individuals": West 1958), "degrades the 'In language' "(Ibid) and excludes the masses from their share of socio-economic gains. (Jernudd 1981; Srivastava and Gupta 1984). The least understood but much the most harmful effects may lie however in what it does to the creative potential of those learners who, in becoming totally English educated, have to give up all too early their contact with their own language, with the traditions that it enshrines and, above all, with the vast majority of most other Indians who are unable to similarly use English as an instrument of communication. Viewed in this context the belief that English language in India is or can ever be a neutral instrument, suggests a failure to understand its hidden power and potential. The English language has been, is and will continue to be a major change-agent for good and bad attitudes, ideas and actions.

2. Work on establishing the national standard(s) must begin in full view of the fact that it is in the multiply powerful roles that English performs as a primary vehicle of information generation (Widdowson 1982) that it is indispensable for the nation's future growth and development. This being so, its roles as a language of social survival and interpersonal interaction have to be regarded as much less central to national needs. For the same reason the Education Commission's (1964-66) plea for making English the most powerful 'library language' should have received stronger support, far greater and more analytical

understanding among language planners and educators, and more resolute follow-up action than it has so far.

3. Work on establishing standards is also bound to bring into effect the dichotomy between the 'ought to' and 'can' of curricular decision making. The former underscores the importance of upholding intelligibility and acceptability in different inter- and intra-national uses of English; the latter serves as a reminder that in so far as state-level curriculum renewal is a "patient pursuit of the possible" (Bruner: 1966), a model that sets the standards at one level need not necessarily prove itself fully adequate at another. To remain realistic educational goals must, above all, reflect a deep awareness of the means that are or can be made available by a schooling system for their realisation.[3]

4. The English language can serve India best only when it not only works but is seen to work in complete harmony with other languages of learning in a system of additive bilingualism where each such language complements the other(s) to serve the shared minimum goals of universal literacy.

5. Finally, a relatively unrecognised resource: English in India is different from many other varieties of English in Asia or elsewhere in the non-English speaking world in that it is supported by an ever-growing and already impressive number of literary works many of which are rightly regarded (see, e.g. Kachru 1986) as a most powerful manifestation of the way in which this alien language has been taking strong roots in the sub-continent. Although it is true that many of the special coinages and creations in much of this literature are only rarely found in the ordinary user's Ind-E, such writings are a most powerful source for the emergence of a variety that is truly Indian. Whether they are born out of processes that are shared by native and non-native writers alike(Widdowson 1988), or are significantly "shaped by the traditions of their other languages" inside their multilingual and multiliterary societies (Thumboo 1988), or can be viewed mainly as "idiosyncratic dialects" (Corder 1981), is perhaps less relevant for our purpose here than the fact that what sets them apart is their ability to serve as a rich resource for the establishment of a variety that is truly Indian.

II.a. Towards an Alternative

i. The question of costs:

A preliminary to any search for alternatives will always be the issue of affordability: 'Can/should the educational system invest its very limited resources in an undertaking which will inevitably make high demands on men and materials?' Raised in the global context (e.g. Greenbaum 1985), the question

has produced doubts about the ability of nations in the 'outer circle' to meet the costs of establishing and upholding autonomous norms. Doing so, it is argued, will call for heavy investment in language planning, teacher training, monitoring the printed language, influencing public attitudes towards the language and so on. (Also see Quirk 1988). The alternative envisaged here rests on the opposite view. In this view, for reasons that are moral as much as economic and social, a country of India's size and dependence on English, cannot afford not to invest in such pivotal sectors of national language planning. The economic argument is that the savings thus made on the phenomenal and fast multiplying educational 'wastage' will more than compensate for the investments made. The moral and social issues arise, as we saw above, in what the existing policies on ELT do to the vast majority of India's population. By setting itself standards that are way beyond the reach of the vast majority and by failing to equip most school leavers with even the basic competence in its use, India's EFL system has turned itself into a virtual farce. The country can ill-afford the price it pays in such colossal waste of human potential and must mobilize the necessary resources to equip the system to undertake what it can and must produce.

ii. The Main Task: Assuming then that the system will be prepared to undertake the reform, the next two questions to address are 'what standard(s) should be aimed at?' and 'how best can they be realised?' For both let us begin by briefly restating first, what exists now and next,what we may realistically envisage.

Under present arrangements the foundations of English are laid in schools which can be seen to form a continuum. At its top end are those schools, more private than public, where the language is taught well by teachers most of whom are themselves able to keep learning. Their numbers are small and, as the days pass, they get reduced to a progressively smaller percentage of the total. The vastly-expanding bottom end comprises those schools whose teachers have little contact with the language as she is used and who are, in most cases, able to produce users of stunted varieties of pidginised, often unusable, English. What therefore needs to be done is first to arrive at an understanding of what is both teachable and acceptable English and then to look for the most appropriate means for its realisation through the state-level ELT system. The key to success here will lie in prescriptive norms that are realistic, are based on sound description and are regularised and promulgated by institutions of the highest national authority. How can all this be done? An answer follows:

Two fundamentals must come first: One, although English in India is used both intranationally and for international communication, a significant difference between the two uses is that often what is both intelligible and

acceptable in the former may fall far short of what works in the latter. Work on setting the national norms should take this inevitable difference into account. On the other hand, something can be thought of as the common ground, viz. the preeminence of the language of fact: English in India is needed primarily as the main source and support for the retrieval, generation and dissemination of scientific and technological knowledge.

To provide for both essentials what is needed is to design and develop a synthetic model[4] of IndE capable of operating at two separate but hierarchical levels. Level 1, which can be called the threshold level (TL), must incorporate those basic morphological and syntactic essentials which are found necessary for the language's dominant intranational uses. At this level it will be necessary to foreground those features which represent English use at the national level and to deliberately exclude those aspects/features that characterise one or another variety (e.g. Kashmiri or Konkani speaker's English)within it. Level 2, to be called the optional advanced level (AL) and to be superposed on Level 1, must then add those features which are found to be necessary to make IndE an acceptable instrument of international communication. To make sure that the resources are used economically and for the good of all, the state-level EF(S)L systems should be made mainly responsible for equipping/enabling the school-leaver to use English as a vehicle of knowledge for TL. Courses in English for AL, for social survival or for other specific purposes (ESP) may then be provided either at tertiary-level institutions of specialist study or at privately-run ESP centres. In both cases it should be possible to run such courses in response to specific institutional or individual learner demands/needs and, in most cases, without sizeable subsidy from state-level systems.

The Work Ahead: What conrete measures must be taken to arrive at a pedagogically usable description of the two levels of IndE? The obvious first step will be a representative corpus-based study of current educated usage - India's 'edulect' (Gonzales and Bautista 1986) with particular reference to those features of morphology and syntax which, though admittedly different or deviant, are judged to be inalienable parts of IndE. If, for example, it is found that in current Indian usage the normal pattern is to use a 'that' clause with the verb 'want' in a sentence like 'The PM wants that every minister should declare his/her assets', the study should bring out the frequency of this use as also the contexts in which it is used. So too, for example, the ubiquitous 'isn't it' (You must be Mr. Das, isn't it?) as a question tag. A beginning in the right direction seems to have been made recently at one of the universities where a million-word corpus of Indian English comprising 500 texts of 2000 words each, is becoming available in machine-readable form as a basis for analysis and description (See Shastri 1985/1989). Much larger and more representative corpora will however be needed to make the research serve as a solid base for a fully acceptable pedagogic model for both TL and AL.

A second important step will become necessary to further reduce the teaching/learning burden to manageable proportions. What should prove most helpful here is descriptive work that will make it possible to confine IndE at the TL (perhaps both levels?) to those aspects/elements of morphology and syntax that constitute the essential core of factual English. For this, although a lot of work will have to be done to arrive at a complete description, good use can be made of existing work and ideas. In one of his last articles on the subject the late Michael West, for example, offered a list of 43 different "structural items which might perhaps be deferred or excluded in a course of Factual English" (West 1958). More recently in his concept of 'nuclear English' Randolph Quirk (e.g. Quirk 1981) has referred to areas/aspects of English syntax which too may be excluded from international English. What should prove equally helpful are the findings of researches done on the simplification of English (Ogden 1930-), on the simplification of its teaching (e.g. West 1953, Palmer 1931.) and more recently on word concordances as a guide to 'real' English (Sinclair 1987).

In educational terms the third important step may prove to be the factor that can spell success or failure. It is the design and development of curricula and courses - source and course materials, appropriate multi-media packages and teacher training programmes - all of which will in turn have to be based on dependable reference works including theoretical and pedagogic grammars of IndE and IndE dictionaries for various purposes. What should make the tasks here manageable is the existence of similar and recently undertaken work in countries of the English-speaking world (e.g. Australia) where the design of such works has been receiving considerable scholarly attention (See, e.g. Ramson 1987). On the curriculum and course design side recent ideas such as H V George's 'field coverage' courses (George 1991) should make the task much more manageable in large classes and difficult circumstances.

A fourth step requires both courage and conviction which, sad to say, have been in short supply among professional linguists who have for long been advocating autonomous norms for IndE. If a scientific description of educated usage is the only road to giving standard IndE general viability, scholarly support and personal example on the part of linguists and educationists is also the only possible road to making it acceptable both nationally and globally. A main reason why GI has failed to gain acceptance among teachers of spoken English is, as we saw above,the attitudinal failures of its authors and advocates. Similarly, one reason why the Indian linguist is unable to convince the policy planner, the administrator or the bulk of academics about the existence of IndE, is his failure to relate what he preaches to what he practices. The only national standard that has any chance of becoming acceptable by being taught in English classrooms, will have to be avowedly prescriptive and openly backed up by acceptable authority among linguists and language educators.

Finally there is a concern that has been raised in both ENL and ES(F)L worlds. It is that of international intelligibility in a situation where dissilimar norms may govern ELT in different parts of the world. The concern is genuine and the dangers of growing incomprehensibility are real in spite of the powerful counterbalancing effects that electronic media including the TV, educational satellites etc produce. It is also true however that in many cases the best answers to the problem lie in a major attitudinal change in both ENL and ES(F)L countries. They lie primarily in the educational systems' willingness and ability to prepare the student to understand and accept variation of different kinds in syntax, style or the strategies of discourse. Given tolerance and 'accommodation' (Sibayan 1985) on both sides, 'dialectal' differences need not become the barriers they are likely to become otherwise.

In looking at variation within English, Randolph Quirk and Garbriele Stein bring out two noteworthy facts: one, the "undoubted fact that English comes in many guises" (1990) and two, the (dis)approving labels that 'we' apply to them "depending on the breadth of our experience". They also make a reference to an important fact about the Chinese language which should serve international English equally, viz., that "one does not set out to learn 'Chinese' but a particular kind of Chinese - Mandarin or Cantonese, for example." Would it, one wonders, do much harm if the same became true of international English and at least some people in some parts of the English users' world had the choice to learn one or another variety of English (Indian, Nigerian, Singaporean, American, Australian) that best served their needs in defined contexts of situation? That certainly would be a way to realize David Crystal's vision of a world where many flowers would blossom in the English language's ever widening international garden. Richard Mulcaster's " English tung... of small reatch" which "... stretcheth no further than this Iland of ours, naie not there over all" (Mulcaster 1582, quoted in Quirk and Stein 1990) would then have proved itself to be an instrument of boundless reach and resource. With its long history of association with English and its limitless need to fashion this unique resource for human happiness and national development, the Indian sub-continent appears to be as good a place as any to work towards such a goal. The tasks are formidable and the challenges immense but so too are the rewards for the language's ever multiplying stakeholders.

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Notes:

1. In his preface to the book Samuel Mathai refers to the "peculiarities in their (Indian users') usage" and advises them "to avoid those which may damage communication with other speakers of the language". The authors may or may not fully share this view but they too "prefer to avoid the use of the somewhat controversial term Indian English" stating that what they have attempted to record are peculiarities of use in the English of those who are likely to influence the Indian learner. Since for them this English showed a continuum from "clearly acceptable to clearly unacceptable", they thought it best to adopt a purely "descriptive attitude" to it.

2. A noteworthy aspect of GI (General Indian English) is that although it came into being mainly through the efforts of Bansal and his colleagues, it appears not to have had their approval as a suitable model for either teaching or research. It was not until 1977 that a research scholar working for his degree (See Dhar 1977) for the first time made use of this synthetic model as the basis for a contrastive analysis. For the author(s) of GI good speakers of English in India have to be judged by their degree of approximation to native English, in particular the British RP.

3. One main failure of recent attempts at language curriculum renewal has been not to base the reforms on a studied understanding of what an educational system can(not) work towards. Not unexpectedly the result has been a widening gap between stated aims and schoolroom realities. The pursuit of unattainable goals in Indian TEFL is clearly related to this failure to harmonize the means and ends.

4. A synthetic model is only partly a product of description. In its making it becomes necessary to incorporate features that make it more intelligible/acceptable. An example is Bansal's GI (FN 2 above) which is only partly based on descriptive studies of the use of English by educated Indians. The author added both phonetic and phonological features in order to bring what was called a regional accent closer to the national norm. A synthetic model of the grammar of IndE must follow the same approach in arriving at an acceptable norm-setting model.

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